

REMARKS

Upon entry of the present amendment, claims 5-8, 13, 16-17 and 20-24 will remain pending in the above-identified application and stand ready for further action on the merits.

The amendments made herein to the claims do not incorporate new matter into the application as originally filed. In this regard, claims 16 and 17 have been amended to recite that the anionic surfactant is "*prepared by a SO<sub>3</sub> gas sulfonation method*". Support for this language occurs in the specification at pages 6 and 12-13 (and in original claim 8). Accordingly, entry of the instant amendment is respectfully requested.

***Incorporation of Earlier Remarks***

The Examiner has previously maintained certain prior art rejections from an earlier Office Action. In this respect, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider remarks set forth in Applicants earlier responses of February 5, 2002 (at page 7, line 1 to page 18, line 1) and November 26, 2002 (at page 6, line 15 to page 9, line 22), since such remarks clearly provide supporting evidence that the instantly claimed methods, detergent granules and compositions are in no way rendered obvious or anticipated by the cited Barletta (US 4,919,847) or Tadsen et al. (US 5,527,489) references of record.

**Prior Art Rejections**

Claims 5-8, 13, 16 and 20 have been previously rejected under 35 USC § 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 USC § 103(a) as obvious over Barletta et al. (US 4,919,847). Claims 5-8, 13, 17 and 20-24 have also been rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Barletta. Likewise, claims 5-6, 13, 16-17 and 20-24 have been rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tadsen et al. (US 5,527,489). Reconsideration and withdrawal of each of these rejections is respectfully requested based upon:

(i) the amendments made herein to claims 16-17, which now recite a "*method for producing detergent granules, comprising the step of dry-neutralizing a liquid acid precursor of a non-soap, anionic surfactant prepared by a SO<sub>3</sub> gas sulfonation method, with a water-soluble, solid, alkali inorganic substance, wherein a dry-neutralizing step is carried out in the presence of 0.1 to 1.0 mol of a sulfuric acid per mol of said liquid acid precursor of a non-soap, anionic surfactant...*", and

(ii) the arguments of Applicants' prior responses of February 5, 2002, and November 26, 2002, which are incorporated herein by reference (as noted above).

Upon considering the amendments made herein, and the earlier filed remarks incorporated herein by reference, the USPTO Examiner

will understand that none of the references being relied on by the USPTO teaches, utilizes or otherwise provides for detergent granules and detergent compositions produced utilizing the method as instantly claimed, and provide no motivation to arrive at the same. Absent such teachings and motivation in the cited art, the outstanding rejections under 35 USC §§ 102 and 103 cannot be sustained.

CONCLUSION

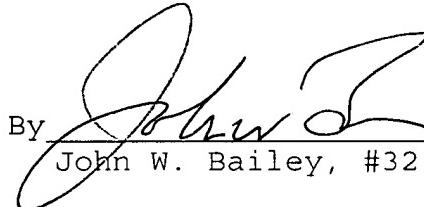
Based upon the amendments and remarks presented herein, the Examiner is respectfully requested to issue a Notice of Allowance indicating that each of the pending claims is allowable under the provisions of Title 35 of the United States Code.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact John W. Bailey (Reg. No. 32,881) at the telephone number below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this,  
concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any  
overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees  
required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of  
time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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